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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 008622

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MONUC FORCE COMMANDER ON CURRENT SITUATION

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM LACY SWING FOR REASONS 1.5  
(C) (D)

**1. (C) SUMMARY**

On December 28, Ambassador Swing met with MONUC Force Commander Mountaga Diallo, acting in absence of SRSG Kamel Morjane, and SRSG Chief of Staff Sow, to review developments in the Congo war in general and his visit to Zambia from which he had just returned the evening before. Diallo is appealing to New York to assist Zambia handle the large numbers of Congolese soldiers and civilians who have fled to northern Zambia in the wake of Pweto's fall to Rwandan and RCD forces. END SUMMARY.

**2. (C) FAC Soldiers in Zambia**

General Diallo confirmed that there are 3374 "declared" FAC (Congolese government) soldiers presently at two locations in Zambia after fleeing the Rwandan RCD attack on Pweto. Although all are "declared" as FAC, there are undoubtedly some Interahamwe, ex-FAR and Burundian FDD elements among them, but their numbers are not presently known.

The immediate issue facing Zambian authorities is how to lodge and feed the FAC soldiers. To support them is quite costly, Diallo said. In addition, the soldiers are being accommodated in school buildings, and schools in Zambia are scheduled to begin in a few days. The ICRC is reviewing this situation to determine its ability to assist but has not yet responded officially. There are also, reportedly, large numbers of other FAC soldiers possibly taking refuge in the extreme northwestern corner of Zambia on Lake Tanganyika, but no one has seen them as yet.

In addition to the FAC soldiers, there are an additional 34,000 Congolese civilians registered in two camps near the DRC border in northern Zambia, and many others not registered--all of whom arrived in the days following the fall of Pweto at the beginning of the month.

**3. (C) SADC Force Concern Re Zambia/Rwanda Talks**

SADC Force Commander Chingombwe (Zimbabwe) had expressed concern to him earlier in the day, Diallo said, about discussions taking place between Zambia and Rwanda. Chingombwe claimed that these concerned a desire by Rwanda to use Zambian territory from which to launch an attack on Lubumbashi. (Diallo discounted this allegation, saying that he had just spoken with a senior Zambian official (Silambwa) who told him that the discussions related to Rwanda's concern about the FDD's having been able to cross back into the DRC after having fled to Zambia.) Nonetheless, Diallo said that Chingombwe may go public with an expression of concern about the talks.

**4. (C) An Appeal to Help Zambia**

Diallo said "Zambia needs help." The UNHCR, he said, cannot help unless the FAC soldiers renounce their military status and accept refugee status. To date, only some 200 had been willing to do so.

Zambia needs international support to keep the FAC soldiers in Zambia. Diallo expressed concern that Rwanda would cause problems should the FAC (and negative force elements) be allowed to return to the DRC.

General Diallo viewed positively Kabila's request to see Zambian President Chiluba (according to word Diallo had from his talk with Silambwa). The meeting would likely take place at Lubumbashi or Lusaka.

**5. (C) Sub-Plans and National Dialogue**

The MLC continues to insist that it will not sign the disengagement sub-plans unless the issue of the national dialogue is effectively addressed. Diallo said that MLC leader Bemba is not opposed to co-facilitation by Masire and Gabonese president Bongo.

The RCD now appears to be backtracking on its commitment to the disengagement sub-plans, saying that its earlier signing is suspended until (a) there is renewed commitment to the national dialogue; (b) MONUC deploys; and (c) disarmament of the "negative forces" has begun.

In these regards, Diallo was somewhat pessimistic that the earlier postponed Kampala meeting of belligerent chiefs of staff would in fact take place on the new date of January

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16. (C) Urgent JPC Requested

Force Commander Diallo has asked the Zambians to urge the chairman to convene an urgent meeting of the Joint Political Commission (JPC). Given the upcoming New Year's holiday, this meeting might not be possible until the second week of January.

17. (C) UN Deployment Technical Team

Asked about the status of the UN technical assessment mission due to arrive January 3 as a precursor to MONUC deployment, General Diallo said he feared that New York may be having second thoughts about sending the team just now in the light of military developments in Katanga and Equateur.

Diallo is urging the UN to send the team, on the date scheduled, arguing that positive efforts are being made to move the Lusaka process forward (the January 10 Kampala meeting of Chiefs of Staff; the proposed JPC meetings; and Libreville II in the second half of January).

SWING